

TOWN OF LUNENBURG, MASSACHUSETTS FIRE DEPARTMENT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

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AFTER ACTION REPORT-ICE STORM DECEMBER 11, 2008

As a result of several debriefing meeting with the Emergency Management Team, the following synopsis outlines our emergency response which includes **effective action/interventions, in need of action/interventions or completed actions/interventions.**

Effective actions/interventions included:

- **The Public Safety Building** was immensely useful on several levels. Due to the features of the facility we were able to house, feed and coordinate town emergency responders. All town officials were able to assemble, parking was accessible and adequate, access and egress for apparatus was efficient and safe.
- **Emergency Operations Center (EOC)** was completely effective in design and operation. The EOC never lost computer access or electricity because of pre-planning and the town's willingness to purchase the proper equipment for an emergency operations center. At no time did Public Safety officials lose radio communications with any local or state emergency services.
- **Cooperation of all town departments** and personnel was extraordinary and all employees went above and beyond the call of duty. Police, fire, dispatch, DPW, elder services, technology, building and grounds, schools, town hall, library and school day care services were intertwined as a united community response.
- **Our shelter operations and staffing** was one of the best in the state. Townwide citizen assistance was especially notable, with over 100 people assisting at the shelter over 14 days. Custodial services were exemplary in keeping the shelter clean and healthy despite heavy traffic in poor weather conditions. The Food Bank is commended for their timely assistance.
- **Cafeteria personnel** from the schools did an excellent job of providing meals for the shelter and at the Public Safety Building providing three meals a day for on duty personnel as well as contractors, National Guardsmen and the management team.
- **Local businesses** and service groups went above and beyond in an effort to assist by providing what ever they could. Contractors provided equipment, restaurants provided food and supplies and retail stores provided goods such as emergency supplies of prescription medication for the residents of our shelter.

Needs action/intervention include:

- **Establishing a dual service phone line.** Although extra phone lines have been supplied into the Public Safety Building we have been unable to answer other town department phones in the EOC (i.e. town hall, DPW). We are continuing to work on this.
- **Ability to broadcast on cable from the EOC.** When the Public Safety Building was constructed, an outgoing cable line was set up for broadcast from the EOC. We need to contact the proper personnel to identify what is needed to accomplish this. We need to identify if moving the cable equipment from the Town Hall to the EOC is possible or if additional equipment needs to be purchased.
- **A larger generator or emergency power supply improvements at the Middle School.** The existing generator did not supply hot water to the shelter in any capacity. The kitchen, an essential component, needed to boil water in order to wash dishes until the power was restored to the Oak Ave. area on Tuesday, Dec. 16. Showers were not available to shelter residents until the power was restored, and even when, were restricted due to concerns about water/sewer usage due to the portable generators that were powering the sewer pump stations.
- **Establish a Public Information Phone Line.** A designated information phone line which would provide updated recorded messages is recommended. A town hall number would be selected and provided in our Emergency Preparedness Guide. (in progress)
- **Identify a Public Information Officer** early in any incident. As part of the EOC Incident Command structure, this authority will be assigned by the Incident Commander and through which all public statements will be released.
- **Clerical help** needs to be assigned to the EOC during the entire incident for documentation and tracking purposes.
- **Establish an agreement to establish an emergency animal shelter.** Several residents would not leave their homes to go to the shelter due to having animals to care for at home.
- **Establish an agreement with a home health agency** would be optimal to assist us with our special needs population. We are collaborating with the Montachusett Regional Planning Committee to establish a regional shelter with Fitchburg and Leominster which may address the special needs populations in our area.
- **Publish and distribute a "Lunenburg Emergency Management Guide."** See the attached draft of the document in progress. The public needs to be educated about their responsibilities during a state of emergency. It was widely seen that citizens traveled in risky areas, despite the state of emergency. Our guide will serve to educate and inform our citizens about their roles during such emergencies.
- **The creation of a Citizen's Emergency Response Team (CERT) and a Medical Resource Team (MRT)** is in process. A talent bank form will be as part of the Emergency Preparedness Guide for purposes of staffing the shelter and other citizen support roles.
- **Improved utilization of town and school employees.** Current CORI'd employees through the town's departments were not maximally utilized. Pre-emptive collaboration between the school and other departments and incident command will improve our pool of human resources.
- **Update and maintain a list of our special needs population** by collaborating with the schools and the Council on Aging. Council on Aging is currently revising their database. The schools maintain an up-to-date database.

Completed interventions include:

- **Storm Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG)** have been re-written by the Lunenburg Fire Department/Emergency Management Team which includes a rapid damage assessment.
- **A phone and laptop readily available for registration at the shelter.** This has been addressed and will be available
- **Improve security of and access to the EOC,** limiting access to essential personnel only. Fire, Police and Dispatch personnel have been advised.
- **Improve access to the radio media.** Incident command will now contact the same radio stations the schools use for cancellations, as townspeople are familiar with them.
- **Improved signage for public information.** The Fire Department has received a grant for a sign board and a light tower. These items have both been ordered.
- **Improved interdepartmental preparedness.** We have supplied a checklist to each department as a guideline for use during emergency incidents. These will be added to our emergency plan.

It is clearly hoped that our community will not soon experience an event of this magnitude in the near future. But we will continue to write, review and revise our plans to be prepared for the inevitability of events such as the ice storm of December 11, 2009. It should be noted that the department heads, town administrators and elected officials all responded to this event in an overwhelmingly positive and effective manner. The collaboration was admirable; many state and government officials specifically commented on the tone and efficiency of emergency operations center, the positive mood at the shelter and our collective response townwide. All are to be commended.

Respectfully submitted,



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